

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Water resources are critical to the health of the communities and environment along each side of the border within the Mexican Highlands subarea. The availability and development of limited water supplies, the use of the water, and the resultant environmental consequences of water use and development have largely defined the historical and cultural context of the region. The management of this important resource, as well as the equitable resolution of present and future conflicts, are of concern to DOI bureaus operating within the subarea. Therefore, continued cooperation among the DOI bureaus is necessary to understand and appropriately interact with the Federal, State, tribal, and local entities and citizens groups of Mexico and the U.S. to address the many complex issues relating to shared-water resources. Important regional goals include implementing solutions for severe ground-water overdraft and land subsidence; resolving water rights and other legal issues; improving water-use efficiency and conservation; addressing local water-quality and contaminant issues; and improving watershed conditions and protecting the remaining remnants of riparian habitat and the species dependent on them.

Suggested priorities from the DOI perspective include:

- assuring up-to-date water-resources data sufficient to assess current conditions of the Mexican Highlands subarea's water resources and to detect the changing status of and trends in surface-water and ground-water resources;
- facilitating increased cooperation among Mexico, the States of Sonora and Arizona, and the DOI bureaus in addressing transboundary water issues affecting lands managed by the DOI;
- recognizing the significance of aquatic and riparian resources and managing U.S. Federal lands in a manner that will maximize biological integrity and enhance habitat for fish and other wildlife species;
- understanding the possible effects of existing water withdrawals on threatened and endangered species, riparian habitat, water-sensitive resources, and localized land subsidence;
- managing DOI lands in a manner that minimizes adverse effects on water resources and water-dependent environments through implementation of water conservation, sustainable design, and public education; and
- promoting public awareness of the importance of water resources and water-dependent environments in the Mexican Highlands subarea. Many of these actions have been identified as components for the Border XXI Implementation Plans (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1996b).

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